



The Red Cross receives a new ambulance from the “Aruba Way”

On Tuesday afternoon, February 13, Governor Fredis Refunol, as Honorary Head of the Aruban Red Cross had the pleasurable task of officially receiving the keys to a brand new ambulance for the volunteer organization. Joining the governor in receiving this gift from the Aruba Way Foundation was Marieta Wanopa, head of the Red Cross Volunteers Corps. Roland van de Linde of the Valero Volunteers headed the group of Valero employees presenting the new vehicle.

The movement to acquire a new ambulance for Aruba’s Red Cross began last year, with a fundraising walk organized by Valero’s Aruba Way Foundation and the Valero Volunteers. The Aruba Way was started by Valero when they took over the refinery, and allows its employees to designate any given amount to be withheld from their paychecks and deposited into a fund, which the company then supplements by 50%. The Aruba Way Foundation, and the employee organization of Valero Volunteers is devoted to community activism and assisting where there is need, and have sponsored many successful fundraisers to the benefit of Aruba.

In the case of the new ambulance, there was a very great need, and a great expense, and Valero answered not only from the Aruba Way Fund, but also with additional monies from the Valero Marketing and Supplies, Aruba N.V. The original estimate for the cost of an ambulance was based on the purchase of a second hand vehicle, but Valero funded a brand new, fully equipped ambulance, which Red Cross President Greg Peterson revealed was twice the cost of the original estimate, totaling 140,000 Aruban florins.

Mr. Peterson also offered thanks to the generosity of a number of parties that cooperated in bringing the ambulance to Aruba for the least cost. These include R.E. Yrausquin and Sons, the car dealership that ordered the vehicle and provided it at cost. Shipping companies Viking Freight Services Miami, Gomez Enterprises (King Ocean), Viking Freight Aruba, and ASTEC, all of whom were involved in transporting the ambulance and clearing it through customs, none of which charged for their services. The Government of Aruba, though Finance Minister Nilo Swaen supported the project by exempting it from import duties, and Fast Signs donated the designing, materials and placement the Red Cross detailing.

Mrs. Wanopa, upon receiving the vehicle from Valero, presented them in turn with posters and tee shirts that are a part of the new Red Cross HIV/AIDS Awareness campaign. The promise of the new ambulance and the initial donation of 97,000 florins was made last May, during the Golden Jubilee celebration of the Red Cross in Aruba. Its official presentation made a wonderful gift just in time for Valentine’s Day and its worth has already been proven in saving a life by transporting someone to the hospital during the various Carnival events. “Valero is a good neighbor to Aruba,” expressed Mr. Peterson, “they put their money where their mouth is, and this was an act of pure love and community concern. They are willing to help “the invisible person” and save a life, without ever knowing exactly whom they serve. I hope that other businesses and those with the means to help the community can take an example from Valero and the “Aruba Way.”